

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-06

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DODE-00 INR-05 RSC-01 /034 W
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R 041427Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2702

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1627

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS PLO XF

SUBJECT: PLO "MODERATES" VIEW OF ME SETTLEMENT EFFORT

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO AN NAHAR EDITOR-PUBLISHER GHASSAN TUEINI, WHOM WE KNOW TO BE WELL-INFORMED ON FEDAYEEN TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS, 'ARAFAT AND SO-CALLED PLO "MODERATES" CONTINUE TO YEARN FOR CONTACTS WITH USG AND SOME FORM OF ASSOCIATION WITH ME SETTLEMENT PROCESS. IN TUEINI'S VIEW, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE ONLY LIMITED TIME LEFT TO PURSUE THESE OBJECTIVES BEFORE THEY WILL BE FORCED INTO POSITION OF TRYING TO SPOIL SETTLEMENT PROCESS FOR ALL OTHER PARTIES CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

1. IN MEETING JAN 30 WITH DCM AND POLSEC CHIEF,
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LEBANESE PRESS MAGNATE GHASSAN TUEINI COMMENTED AS

FOLLOWS RE CURRENT POSITION AND ATTITUDES OF THE PLO
"MODERATES" TOWARD ON-GOING EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE ME
PEACE SETTLEMENT:

2. TUEINI SAID YASIR 'ARAFAT AND HIS "MODERATE"
FEDAYEEN SUPPORTERS HAD EXPECTED THAT PLO SUCCESSES
IN ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL ARENAS OVER PAST FEW MONTHS
WOULD HAVE BY NOW GAINED THEM SOME FORM OF RECOGNITION
BY USG, AS WELL AS SOME PROSPECT OF EVENTUALLY
ASSOCIATING THEMSELVES WITH ME SETTLEMENT EFFORT. AS
THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED, THEY ARE BECOMING UNEASY AND,
AS USUAL, INCREASINGLY SUSPICIOUS. TUEINI SAID 'ARAFAT
HAS NOT YET GIVEN UP HOPE OF ACHIEVING THESE GOALS,
BUT HE IS RUNNING OUT OF TIME IN WHICH TO PRESERVE
ABILITY TO PURSUE THEM. IN ANOTHER MONTH OR TWO, IF
'ARAFAT CAN PRODUCE NO FURTHER "BREAKTHROUGHS",
HE WILL BE FORCED BY CURRENT DRIFT TOWARD "REJECTIONISM"
IN INTER-PALESTINIAN POLITICS TO ADOPT MORE HARD-LINE
ATTITUDE AND JOIN IN "REJECTIONIST" EFFORTS TO SPOIL
SETTLEMENT EFFORT FOR ALL OTHER PARTIES CONCERNED.

3. TUEINI SAID THAT GROWING FEAR AMONG PLO "MODERATES"
THAT THEY WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM ANY PARTICIPATION IN
SETTLEMENT PROCESS HAS ALREADY BEGUN CAUSE PROBLEMS
FOR 'ARAFAT. IT WAS THIS FEAR WHICH PROMPTED PLO
SPOKESMEN AND PLO INFORMATION APPARATUS TO CIRCULATE
SCURRILOUS ALLEGATIONS RE EGYPT'S COOPERATION WITH
FURTHER STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL THAT
HAVE LATELY ANGERED PRESIDENT SADAT AND DRAWN ADVERSE
COMMENT IN CAIRO MEDIA. TUEINI STATED CATEGORICALLY,
HOWEVER, THAT DESPITE THESE PROVOCATIONS, 'ARAFAT IS
STILL PRIVATELY ANXIOUS TO KEEP IN STEP WITH EGYPTIANS
AND TO ACCEPT SADAT'S ASSURANCE THAT EGYPTIAN POLICY
WILL EVENTUALLY PRODUCE RESULTS ON WEST BANK WHICH
PLO "MODERATES" WILL BE ABLE TO "LIVE WITH".

4. TUENI INSISTED THAT SADAT HAS PROPOSED TO 'ARAFAT
(AND THAT LATTER HAS INDICATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO
ACCEPT) CREATION OF AN ARAB LEAGUE MILITARY DELEGATION
--HEADED BY AN EGYPTIAN GENERAL, BUT COMPRISING A
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PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE ACCEPTABLE TO PLO AND PER-
HAPS A JORDANIAN MILITARY REPRESENTATIVE AS WELL-
WHICH WOULD ACT AS SURROGATE FOR ALL ARAB PARTIES CON-
CERNED IN NEGOTIATING A WEST BANK DISENGAGEMENT AGREE-
MENT WITH ISRAEL AT GENEVA. TUEINI ALSO CLAIMED 'ARAFAT
WOULD FIND IT POSSIBLE TO PORTRAY SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT
AS ANOTHER "VICTORY" FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE AND THEREBY
WIN SUFFICIENT BACKING FOR IT WITHIN FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT

TO ALLOW IT TO PROCEED.

5. 'ARAFAT'S MAJOR PROBLEM, REPEATED TUEINI, PRIMARILY
IS ONE OF TIME--TIME IN WHICH TO DEMONSTRATE TO HIS

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SP-02 DODE-00

INR-05 CIAE-00 RSC-01 (ISO) W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2703

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

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FOLLOWERS THAT HIS POLICY OF TRUSTING IN SADAT'S AS-
SURANCES WILL PRODUCE CONCRETE AND "POSITIVE" RESULTS
ON THE GROUND IN WEST BANK. TUEINI THINKS 'ARAFAT'S
TIME-FRAME IS RAPIDLY DIMINISHING, HOWEVER, WHICH MAY
BE ANOTHER REASON WHY HE HAS BEGUN TO ASSOCIATE HIMSELF
WITH PUBLIC DENUNCIATIONS OF EGYPTIAN POLICY. IN
TUEINI'S VIEW, THIS ENABLES 'ARAFAT TO PAVE WAY FOR THE
HARD-LINE, EXTREMIST POSITION HE MAY FINALLY HAVE TO
ADOPT IF TIME RUNS OUT AND HE IS FORCED--IN ORDER TO
AVOID BEING OUT-FLANKED BY "REJECTIONIST" INFLUENCE
WITHIN FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT--TO JETTISON HIS "MODERATE"
AMBITIONS. THIS COULD COME ABOUT EITHER IN EVENT THAT

- (A) SADAT PROVES UNABLE TO IMPLEMENT HIS ASSURANCES, OR
(B) ME SETTLEMENT EFFORT COLLAPSES ALTOGETHER.

6. TUEINI ALSO EXPECTS 'ARAFAT WILL TRAVEL TO CAIRO
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TO MEET WITH SADAT IN NEAR FUTURE, PROBABLY BEFORE
SECRETARY KISSINGER'S NEXT VISIT TO EGYPT. HE CLAIMED
'ARAFAT HAD EARLIER DECLINED SADAT'S INVITATIONS FOR
HIM TO COME TO CAIRO ON PRETEXT OF HAVING TO SUPERVISE
FEDAYEEN OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAELIS IN ARQOUB REGION
OF SOUTH LEBANON.

7. TUEINI ALSO REPORTED THAT 'ARAFAT HAS LATELY BECOME
MORE SUSPICIOUS THAN USUAL OF HIS POTENTIAL RIVALS WITHIN
PLO AND FATAH. THIS SUSPICION, ACCORDING TO TUEINI,
HAS BEEN FED NOT ONLY BY "CERTAIN ARTICLES" APPEARING
IN WESTERN PRESS SUGGESTING THAT USG AND ISRAEL MIGHT
BE WILLING TO DEAL WITH A MORE "RESPECTABLE" PALESTINIAN
MOVEMENT WHICH HAD RID ITSELF OF 'ARAFAT AND ITS TERRORIST
IMAGE, BUT ALSO BY 'ARAFAT'S BELIEF THAT CERTAIN "LEFTIST"
PERSONALITIES WITHIN FATAH HAVE BEEN PLOTTING AGAINST
HIM. TUEINI SAID THIS WAS WHY FATAH'S MILITARY CHIEF,
ABU SALEH, HAD BEEN "EXILED" TO EAST BERLIN. HE
ADDED THAT 'ARAFAT'S RELATIONS WITH ABU IYAD ARE ALSO AT
AN ALL-TIME LOW AS RESULT OF LATTER'S "UNAUTHORIZED"
(AND ABORTED) TERRORIST OPERATION AT RABAT, HIS LIBYAN-
INSPIRED HANDLING OF VC-10 HIJACKING AFFAIR AT TUNIS, AND
HIS RECENT EFFORTS TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH FEDAYEEN
"REJECTIONISTS" IN OPPOSING 'ARAFAT'S POLICIES VIS-A-VIS
EGYPT AND JORDAN.

8. TUEINI THOUGHT THESE INTERNAL PROBLEMS, COMBINED
WITH GROWING UNEASINESS OVER FROZEN STATE OF PLO-US
RELATIONS AND PROSPECT OF PLO'S CONTINUED EXCLUSION
FROM ME SETTLEMENT PROCESS, MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT
FOR 'ARAFAT TO PLACE WRAPS ON, MUCH LESS PUBLICLY DISAVOW,
ALL FEDAYEEN "ARMED STRUGGLE" OPERATIONS, PARTICULARLY
THOSE CONDUCTED AGAINST ISRAEL FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON AND
ELSEWHERE. HE SAID SENSE OF PARANOIA WHICH 'ARAFAT
SHARES ABOUT US AND ISRAELI INTENTIONS WITH MOST OF
HIS FOLLOWERS CAUSES THEM TO FEAR THAT BY CURBING
PALESTINIAN TERRORISM THEY WOULD BE EXTINGUISHING A
PSYCHOLOGICAL "FLAME" THAT MIGHT SERVE AS USEFUL POLITICAL
TOOL FOR PLO AT SOME POINT IN FUTURE.

9. COMMENT: TUEINI HAS EXCELLENT PIPELINE TO KEY
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PLO FIGURES, INCLUDING 'ARAFAT HIMSELF, AND HIS COMMENTS ON THEIR PERCEPTIONS AND THINKING CARRY CONSIDERABLE AUTHORITY. HIS ASSESSMENTS TALLY RATHER CLOSELY WITH OUR OWN, ALTHOUGH WE ENTERTAIN SOME DOUBT RE EASE WITH WHICH 'ARAFAT COULD "SELL" NOTION OF ARAB LEAGUE NEGOTIATING FUTURE DISPOSITION OF WEST BANK TO HIS FOLLOWERS AND ADVERSARIES WITHIN FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT. AT ANY RATE, WE FIND TUEINI'S CONTENTION THAT 'ARAFAT COULD STILL DELIVER THE GOODS INTERESTING, AND WE CERTAINLY SUBSCRIBE TO HIS PREDICTION THAT PLO "MODERATES" WILL AT SOME POINT TRY TO SPOIL ENTIRE ME SETTLEMENT PROCESS IF THEY CONTINUE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM IT.
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